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Trends. Pakistan: An Iatrogenic Coup?

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The usual bromides from the usual suspects followed the recent military coup in Pakistan in which Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was removed from power. There should be no violence. There should be peace. There should be a new civilian, democratic government as soon as possible. To a less salient degree, there have been some grudging admissions that the military coup--at least publicly led by Pervez Musharraf--might actually foster a more stable, cohesive, orderly environment in the short term. Such an environment is deemed of high import for a nuclear power (Pakistan) in conflict with another nuclear power (India) adjacent to it.

One might make a strong case, however, that Mr. Sharif's compliance with United States Government (USG) pleas for peace, the reduction of violence, and the withdrawal of forces during this year's military conflict between Pakistani infiltrators and Indian defenders in Kashmir was one significant precipitant of the coup. Another may well have been Mr. Sharif's actions to increase civilian control over the military--a US public goal for countries throughout the world.

Future civilian leaders in Pakistan might well hesitate to accept USG political guidance. And citizens throughout the world desiring peace, democracy, and the rule of law might ponder that pleas for these goals may lead to a converse reality. As a physician's best-intended treatment may precipitate iatrogenic disease, so, too, may USG policy prescriptions. (See Casarett, D., & Ross, L.F. (1997). Overriding a patient's refusal of treatment after an iatrogenic complication. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 336, 1908-1910; Dishion, T.J., McCord, J., & Poulin, F. (1999). When interventions harm: Peer groups and problem behavior. *American Psychologist*, 54, 755-764; Karlin, R. A., & Orne, M.T. (1996). Commentary on Borawick v. Shay: Hypnosis, social influence, incestuous child abuse, and satanic ritual abuse: The iatrogenic creation of horrific memories for the remote past. *Cultic Studies Journal*, 13, 42-94; Perlez, J. (October 13, 1999). U.S. urges Pakistani Army to restore democracy soon. *The New York Times*, p. A10.) (Keywords: Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan, Peace, Political Stability.)